

1 Corinthians 13:1-13 “A More Excellent Way” (Part 15 of 16)

1 Corinthians 12:31 But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.

- **Warren Wiersbe:** *“It is tragic when the world takes a chapter like this (as it does) and divorces it from its true Christian meaning. The unsaved man can no more experience this kind of love than can a marble statue! It takes the indwelling of the Spirit of God in the life, and the empowering of that Spirit, for anyone to display this kind of character in daily life.”*¹

- **John, “the disciple whom Jesus loved”**

- He knew God’s love
- God’s love changed him
- Son of thunder – Disciple of love

1 John 4:7-19

7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

8 He who does not love does not know God, for **God is love.**

9 **In this the love** of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.

10 **In this is love**, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

12 No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us.

13 By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.

14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world.

15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.

16 And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. **God is love**, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.

17 **Love has been perfected among us in this:** that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world.

18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment.

But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.

19 **We love Him because He first loved us.**

1 John 5:3 **For this is the love of God**, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.

- **Paul noted that “love” is the first evidence of the “Spirit fruit”:**
 - **First, necessary evidence of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit**

¹Wiersbe, W. W. (1997, c1992). *Wiersbe's expository outlines on the New Testament* (Page 456). Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books.

Galatians 5:22-23

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **23** gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

Vvs. 1-3: In the absence of love:

- **V1 – I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal**
- **V2 – I am nothing**
- **V3 – I am unprofitable**

1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, **but have not love**, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.

- **Gift of tongues** useless without love:
 - Hebrew traditions tells of Angel's preference to speak the Hebrew language.
 - I can speak the greatest of all languages (angelic) or the lowest (man's) – **love must be the vehicle**
 - **Sounding brass:** Corinth was famous for its "bronze," and bronze vases (not "gongs," as in most translations) were often used for amplifiers in the outdoor theaters of this period. ²
 - **Clanging Cymbals:** loud, but doesn't communicate anything.

2 And though I have *the gift of prophecy*, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, **but have not love**, I am nothing.

- **Gift of Prophecy** useless without Love:
 - What would encouragement, edification and comfort be without love?
- **Gifts of Wisdom & Knowledge** useless without Love
- **Gift of Faith** useless without Love.
 - **The power to love is greater than any other power!**
 - **The choice to love can only be supernatural!**

3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, **but have not love**, it profits me nothing.

- **Gift of Giving** useless without Love
 - Who wants a gift given out of compulsion or anger?

In the Abundance of LOVE:

V4 – I suffer long; I no longer envy; etc.

4 Love suffers long *and* is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up;

5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil;

²Keener, C. S., & InterVarsity Press. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary : New Testament* (1 Co 13:1). Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.

6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth;
7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

- Practical means
 - **Oswald Chambers:** *The test of my love for Jesus is the practical one, all the rest is sentimental jargon.*³
- Note how the fruit of the Spirit are almost listed verbatim:
Galatians 5:22-23
22 But the fruit of the Spirit is **love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.** . . .
- Concerning your own actions:
 - **V4:** *Patience (makrothymia) is the capacity to be wronged and not retaliate.*⁴
 - Kindness instead of vengeance.
 - Envy: Willing to wait for God's providence
 - Love God's promotion alone
 - Consistently humble, and appreciates humbling situations
James 4:6 But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."
 - **V5-7: In Treating others – "neighborly Love"**
 - Treats all people with respect and honor
 - Love wants its reward in heaven
 - No amount of provocation will result in acts of evil
 - Never holds a grudge, and never a record of wrongdoing
 - Willing to bear anything God allows to come your way
 - Willing to believe and rejoice in God's benefits to others.
 - Remains full of faith:
 - Hoping all things
 - Enduring all things
- *Neighbor-love is profiled in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. Its total lack of self-concern is breathtaking. Neighbor-love seeks the neighbor's good, and the true measure of it is how much it gives to that end.
Love is a principle of action rather than of emotion. It is a purpose of honoring and benefiting the other party. It is a matter of doing things for people out of compassion for their need, whether or not we feel personal affection for them. It is by their active love to one another that Jesus' disciples are to be recognized (John 13:34-35).*⁵

8 Love never fails. But whether *there are* prophecies, they will fail; whether *there are* tongues, they will cease; whether *there is* knowledge, it will vanish away.

³Chambers, O. (1993, c1935). *My utmost for his highest : Selections for the year* (October 18). Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House Publishers.

⁴Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁵Packer, J. I. (1995, c1993). *Concise theology : A guide to historic Christian beliefs*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House.

9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part.

10 But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.

- **Love is eternal**
 - Prophecies will not be needed in the eternal kingdom
 - Different tongues will not be necessary in the eternal kingdom
 - Our knowledge now is only partial
- When Jesus (**the perfect perfection**) has finally come all the Spiritual gifts will not be needed

11 When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

- Nothing is more childish than to treat others with only yourself in mind.
- Reaching God's kingdom will be the final maturation process
 - **Real adult men** love Jesus and go to Heaven
 - **Real adult women** love Jesus and go to Heaven

12 For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.

- A city like Corinth, famous for its bronze mirrors, would have particularly appreciated Paul's final illustration. The perfection and imperfection mentioned in verse 10 were deftly likened to the contrasting images obtained by the indirect **reflection** of one's face viewed in a bronze mirror and the same face when viewed directly. ⁶

13 And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these *is* love.

- **These three – all excellent**
 - Love is the greatest gift
 - Love is the greatest pursuit
- **Here is the “more excellent way”**
 - Wisdom dictates the “more excellent way”
 - Knowledge dictates the “more excellent way”
 - Christian maturity gauged by how often you do it the “more excellent way”

⁶Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.